Secure Messaging User Guide

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- **Frequently Asked Questions** to get answers to common questions
- **Protecting Your Personal Information** offers tips to safe guard your information

For questions about using My HealtheVet, use the Contact MHV link at the top of every My HealtheVet page.

Introduction to Secure Messaging

Secure Messaging is an easy to use online messaging system available through My Health*e*Vet. It is for VA Patients who have a My Health*e*Vet [Premium](#)* account to communicate online with their VA health care teams. Secure Messaging is safe and secure, because the messages you send and receive are all kept within My Health*e*Vet.

Secure Messaging improves the connection between you and your VA health care team. You can use it to ask about your VA appointments, medications, and your lab results or to have routine questions answered. Similar to email, Secure Messaging allows you to write a message, save drafts, review your sent messages and maintain a record of your conversations. Since the lines of communication are open, it helps make your VA appointments more productive because your VA health care team has more than just notes from your last appointment.

You can set your preferences to notify your personal email when a Secure Message is waiting for you in your My Health*e*Vet inbox. Use Secure Messaging to keep your VA health care team close. Secure Messaging is there when you need it - just as it should be. Start using Secure Messaging today to discuss your health with your VA health care team.

<p style="text-align:center"><strong style="color:red">Secure Messaging is not for emergency situations
Secure Messaging should only be used for
non-emergency and non-urgent matters</p>

 **To get a My Health*e*Vet [Premium](#) account, you will need to go through [authentication](#). VA verifies a Veterans' identity by this process. This is done before allowing access to your VA health record.*

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What Is Needed to Use Secure Messaging

To access **Secure Messaging** you must:

- Be a Veteran enrolled at a VA health care facility
- Be registered as a VA Patient in My Health*e*Vet
- Have a My Health*e*Vet Premium account*

If you use the VA Healthcare System and want to use Secure Messaging, view parts of your official VA health record or DoD Military Service Information, you must complete the [authentication](#) process.

 **To get a My Health*e*Vet [Premium](#) account, you will need to go through Authentication. The VA verifies a Veterans' identity by this process. This is done before allowing access to your VA health record. The first step to obtaining a Premium account is to register for a My Health*e*Vet account.*

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This section provides information about **Registering**, the different **My Health*e*Vet Account Types**, how you know what account type you have, and **Upgrading to a Premium Account**.

Step 1 – Register: Get a My HealtheVet Account
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Member Login
User ID:
Password:
Login
Forgot User ID?
Forgot Password?
First time My HealtheVet user? **Register today!**
REGISTER

[Registration](#) is quick and easy.

To begin:

- Go to My Health*e*Vet at www.myhealth.va.gov
- Select the **Register** button
- On the registration form:
  - Enter your First Name, Middle Name and Last Name, Date of Birth, Gender and Social Security Number
  - If you have a special character in your name, such an apostrophe (') or tilde (accent mark) **do not** include them; however if you have two last names you can use the hyphen (-) between your names. If you use the VA Healthcare System, it is important that this information match your VA health record information.   **TIP:** Use your Veterans Identification Card (VIC) information to match your registration information.
  - If you are a Veteran and use the VA Healthcare System, when you register be sure to select the checkbox **VA Patient** and **Veteran,** view sample below. This must be done before you get an [Advanced](#) account or upgrade to a [Premium](#) account. To get a Premium account, you will need to go through the Authentication process to upgrade your account.

RELATIONSHIP TO THE VA

Do you use the VA Healthcare System? Selecting **VA Patient** is the first step to gain access to:

- VA Prescription Refills
- Secure Messaging
- VA Blue Button
- Key portions of your electronic VA health record
- DoD Military Service Information (for some).

Tell us about yourself. *(Check all that apply. *At least one is required.)*
- ☑ VA Patient
- ☐ Veteran
- ☐ Health Care Provider
- ☐ Veteran Advocate/Family Member/Friend
- ☐ VA Employee
- ☐ Other

- If you have already registered for a My Health*e*Vet account and need to check that you have registered as a **VA Patient**, you can do the following:
  - Login to My Health*e*Vet
  - Select the **PERSONAL INFORMATION** tab
  - Select the **Profiles** sub-tab
  - Under **Relationship to the VA,** if you use the VA Health Care System, make sure you select the **VA Patient** checkbox
    - o If **VA Patient** is not checked and you use the VA Health Care System, select this box
    - o This will put a checkmark in the box
  - Select the **Save** button at the bottom of the screen

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My HealtheVet Account Types: How to know what account type you have

Specific data in the **VA Blue Button** is available to you based on your My Health*e*Vet account type. All users who have a Basic account are able to view their self-entered information. If you are a VA patient, you can upgrade your account to Advanced or Premium. These account types may allow you to view parts of your VA health record and/or DoD Military Service Information.

If you have a **Basic** account, you can print, download or save the following *Self Reported* information:

- *Activity Journal, Self Reported*
- *Allergies, Self Reported*
- *Family Health History, Self Reported*
- *Food Journal, Self Reported*
- *Health Care Providers, Self Reported*
- *Health Insurance, Self Reported*
- *Immunizations, Self Reported*
- *Labs and Tests, Self Reported*
- *Medical Events, Self Reported*
- *Medications and Supplements, Self Reported*
- *Military Health History, Self Reported*
- *My Goals: Current Goals, Self Reported*
- *My Goals: Completed Goals, Self Reported*
- *Treatment Facility, Self Reported*
- *Vitals and Readings, Self Reported*

If you have an **Advanced** account it includes all the features of a Basic account plus:
- *VA Medication History (limited to 2 years) – this section allows you to view your VA medications and prescription history*
- *VA Allergies and Adverse Reactions.*

If you have a **Premium** account, the VA Blue Button includes all the features of a **Basic** and **Advanced** account in addition to the following:

- *VA Admissions and Discharges – Discharge Summaries are available 3 calendar days after they are completed*
- *VA Appointments (future)*
- *VA Appointments (limited to past 2 years) VA Electrocardiogram (EKG)Reports (a list of reports)*
- *VA Immunizations*
- *VA Laboratory Results (Chemistry/Hematology/Microbiology) - VA Laboratory Results are available 3 calendar days after they have been verified. Depending on the type of test, some laboratory results may not be available right away.*
- *VA Notes – VA Notes from January 1, 2013 are available 3 calendar days after they have been completed and signed by all required members of your VA health care team.*
- *VA Problem List (active problems) – Your VA Problem List contains active health problems your VA providers are helping you manage. This information is available 3 calendar days after it had been entered. It may not contain active problems managed by non-VA health care providers.*
- *VA Radiology Reports – VA Radiology Reports are available 3 calendar days after they have been completed.*
- *VA Surgical Pathology Reports (Surgical, Cytology and Electron Microscopy) - VA Pathology Reports are available 14 calendar days after they have been completed. Some studies done at a non-VA Facility may not be available or they may not necessarily include an interpretation.*
- *VA Vitals and Readings*
- *VA Continuity of Care Document (VA CCD)*
- *DoD Military Service Information*

Plus, you are able to use **Secure Messaging** to communicate online with your VA health care team.

My Health*e*Vet Account Type Icons

After you log into My Health*e*Vet (in the Member Logon/Logout box), your account type is displayed by a letter icon after your name. The letter icon **B** represents a Basic account. **A** represents an Advanced account and **P** represents a *Premium* account.
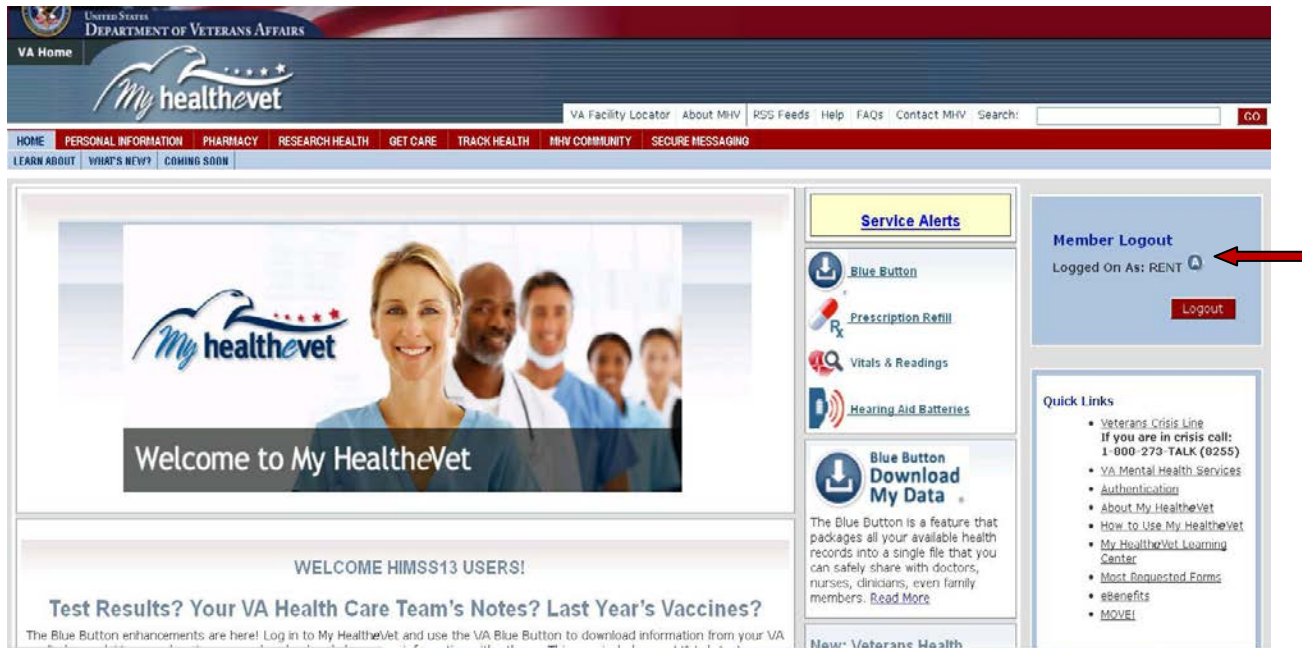
When you hover over the letter-icon, it will display a phrase to let you know what kind of account you have. For example, if you have an **Advanced** account, the letter icon **A** will be displayed after your name.   When you hover over the icon the following message is displayed **You have an Advanced Account**.

You can select the letter icon to get further information about your account type. When you do this, you will be directed to the *My HealtheVet Account Types* definition page.

Step 2 - Upgrade to a Premium Account
_____

To upgrade your My Health*e*Vet account, you will need to go through **authentication**. The VA verifies a Veterans' identity before allowing access to your VA health record by this process. This is done to protect your personal information. Before you can start to upgrade your account, you first need to be registered in My Health*e*Vet as a **VA Patient**. If you do not have an account, please take this time to register.

After you have registered on My Health*e*Vet as a **VA Patient**, there are two ways to upgrade your My Health*e*Vet account:

1. **In-Person Authentication (IPA)**
Upgrade your account in person. This can be done at your local VA Medical Center or Community Based Outpatient Clinic (CBOC).

2. **Online Authentication**
Upgrade your account through www.ebenefits.va.gov. This is for users who have a connected eBenefits DS Logon Premium account & My Health*e*Vet VA Patient account.

In-Person Authentication can be done the next time you visit your local VA health care facility. Simply follow these three steps:

1. Print, read and sign the VA Release of Information (ROI) form (10-5345a-MHV) (PDF)

2. Take a copy of your signed form and government issued photo identification (Veterans Identification Card or valid driver's license) to your local VA health facility and give it to a qualified VA staff member

3. After the VA staff verifies your information, your My Health*e*Vet account can be upgraded.

Online Authentication is for users who have a connected eBenefits DS Logon Premium account and My Health*e*Vet VA Patient account. It can be done anytime, anywhere, 24/7, and you will not need to visit a VA facility. However, before you can start to upgrade your My Health*e*Vet account online, you need to:

Be registered in My Health*e*Vet as a **VA Patient**

Have an eBenefits/DS Logon Premium Account

Have your My Health*e*Vet VA Patient account information match what is in DEERS (e.g., full name, Social Security Number, date of birth and/or gender)

Connect your eBenefits/DS Logon and My Health*e*Vet Accounts.

After you have successfully connected your **accounts, if** you are a **VA Patient** in My Health*e*Vet and do not have an upgraded account, you will be asked if you would like to start to upgrade your account. Before you select **YES**, please follow these steps to start Online Authentication:

1. Download, print, and sign the VA Release of Information (ROI) form (10-5345a-MHV) (PDF)

2. Mail your signed form to the Release of Information Office at your local VA health care facility. You can use the Facility Locator to find the address.

3. Select **YES - UPGRADE MY ACCOUNT**

Note: After you have mailed the VA Release of Information form, please allow up to 20 business days to complete the Online Authentication process.

Getting Started with Secure Messaging

Step 1 – Login to Secure Messaging

To access **Secure Messaging**, go to My Health*e*Vet at www.myhealth.va.gov and login to your personal account (Member Login box on right side of the screen). Next, select the **SECURE MESSAGING** tab located on the top red navigation bar.
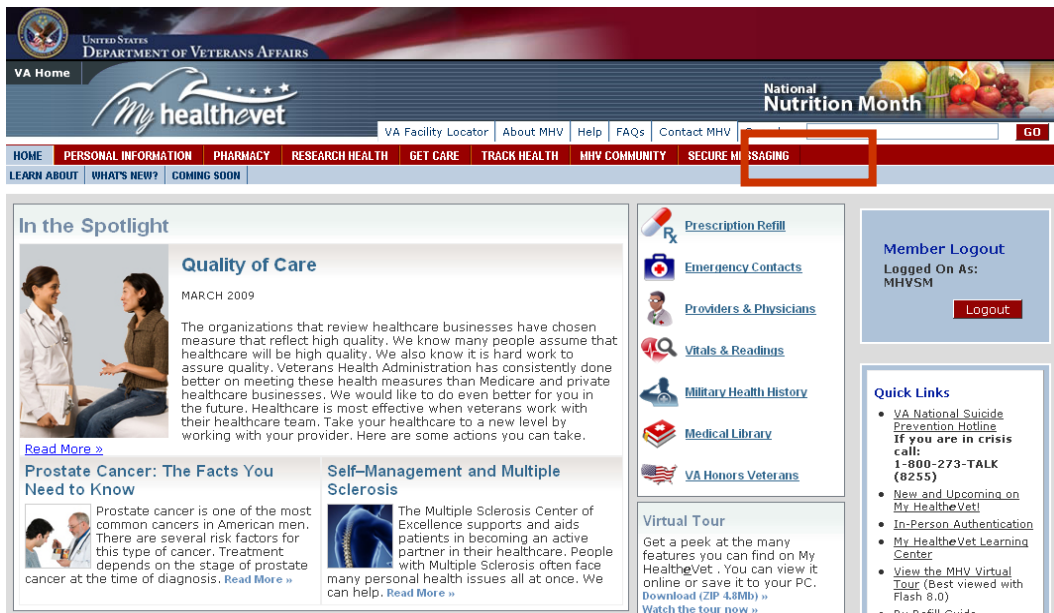
Select the orange **Open Secure Messaging** button to begin to use Secure Messaging.
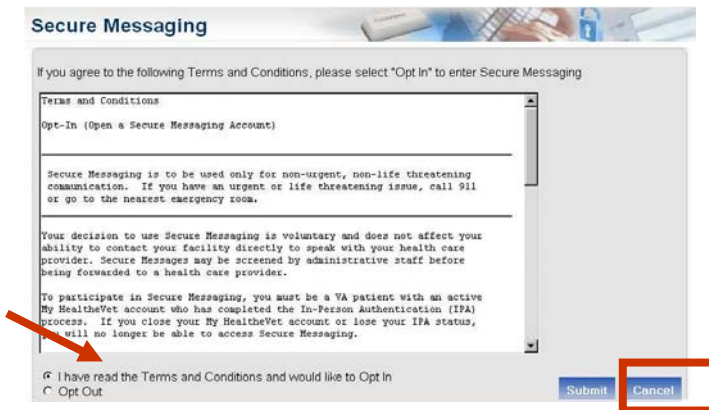
Step 2 - Opt In

When you open **Secure Messaging** for the first time, you will be presented with the Terms and Conditions for using My Health*e*Vet Secure Messaging.

Read the Terms and Conditions and accept by selecting the radio button next to **I have read the Terms and Conditions and would like to Opt In**. Then, select the **Submit** button to open a Secure Messaging account.

Step 3 - Navigating Secure Messaging

Secure Messaging opens to your **Inbox**. From the Inbox you can do several things:

1. You can create a new message by selecting the **New Message** button on the left side of the screen.

2. You can open your Inbox, Drafts, Sent, and Deleted folders for your Secure Messaging account. Under the **New Message** button, select the link for the desired folder.   Secure Messaging will open the folder you selected. *** Notice** the number in parenthesis ( ) next to the links; this number tells you how many messages are currently in this folder.

3. You can create your own folders within your Secure Messaging account. Under **My Folders** select add new folder link and enter a name for your folder. Later, if you want to make changes to a folder you have created (for example rename the folder), select the edit link next to **My Folders** and then make the desired changes.
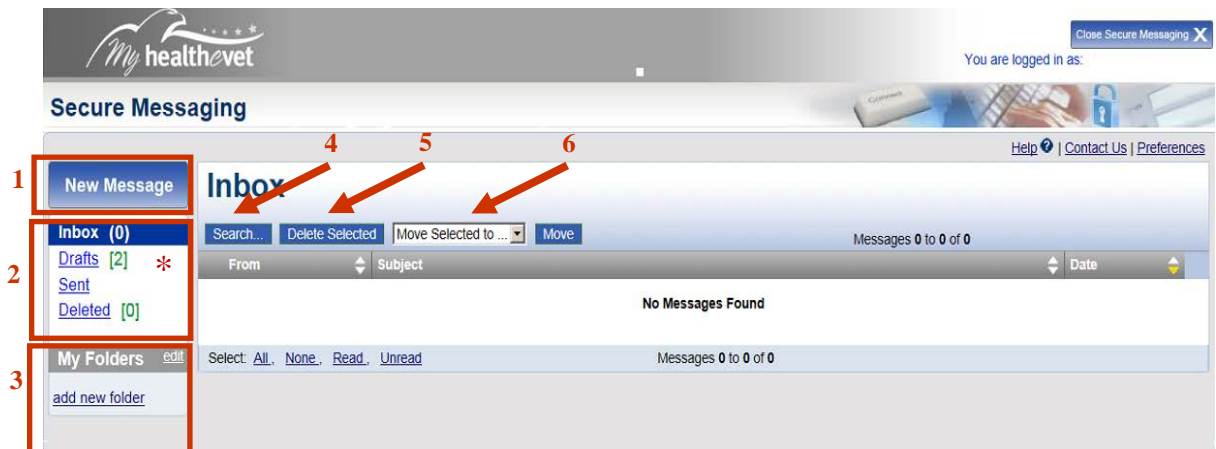
The **Inbox** contains all the new messages that you have received. For each message listed you will know:

- who the message is **From**
- the **Subject** of the message
- the **Date** and time of the message

You have the ability to search for messages within your Inbox.

4. Select the **Search...** button. You will be able to enter Search Criteria - From, Subject, and Date Range – and then select the **Search** button.

   You also have the ability to select certain messages – simply check the box ☐ next to the message in the **From** column.

5. Delete the selected messages by selecting the **Delete Selected** button.
   Note: Secure Messages stay in the Deleted folder for 12 months. They are then archived in the Secure Messaging database. You can contact the Release of Information Office at your local VA health care facility to get archived messages. To find the nearest location, use the VA [Facility Locator](#).

6. Move the selected messages to a folder within your Secure Messaging account by selecting the drop-down arrow ☑ next to **Move Selected to...** to select from a list where you want to move the message (Deleted or one of your other personal folders under My Folders) and then select the **Move** button.

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Step 4 - Open Messages from the Inbox

To open a message in your Inbox, select the message link (as show below) under the **Subject** column.

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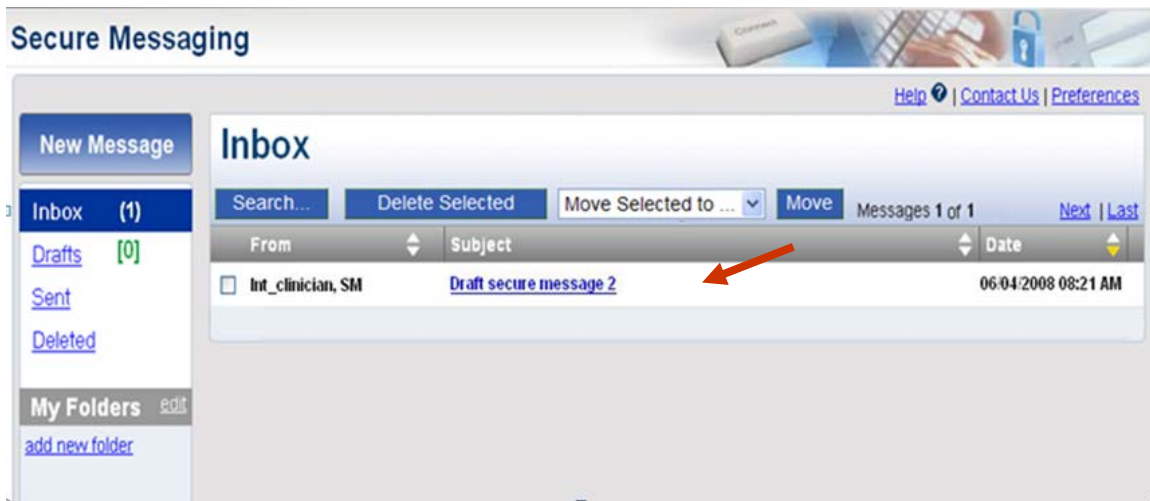
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Message Management

Secure Messaging allows you to communicate with your participating VA Health Care Team in a secure environment within the My Health*e*Vet portal. You have the ability to send and receive messages from your VA Health Care Team, as well as manage and maintain your messages within your Secure Messaging account.

Step 1 - Create a New Message and Send

Create a new message by selecting the **New Message** button in your Inbox.
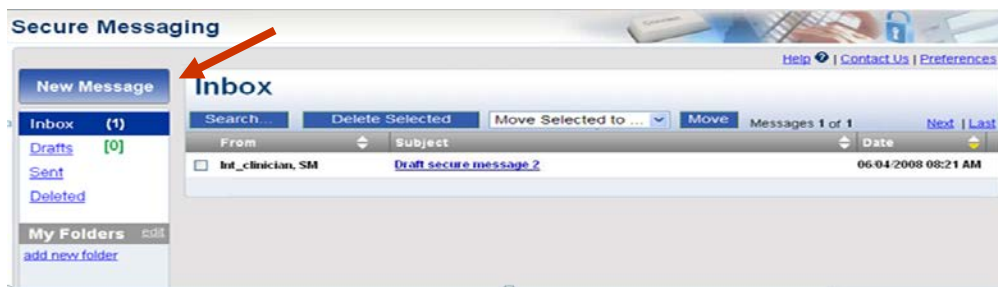
To create a new message, fill in the appropriate information:

1. Select the Health Care Team for whom the message is for by selecting the drop-down arrow ⌄ for **To:** – please note, only your participating VA Health Care Team will appear in the list.

2. Select the Subject of your message by selecting the drop-down arrow ⌄ for **Subject**: – you have 4 options to choose from:

   - **Appointment:** Choose this to ask about a future or existing appointment
   - **Medication**: Choose this to renew a medication or ask a question about medication
   - **Test:** Choose this to ask about a test result or about a future test or procedure
   - **General:** Choose this for all other non-urgent issues. **Note**: If you choose General use the space next to the Subject field to type in additional information about your subject

3. Type your message.

4. When you have completed the message, select the **Send** button. **Note**: You also have the options to save the message as a draft (select **Save as Draft** button) or cancel the message (select **Cancel Message** button).
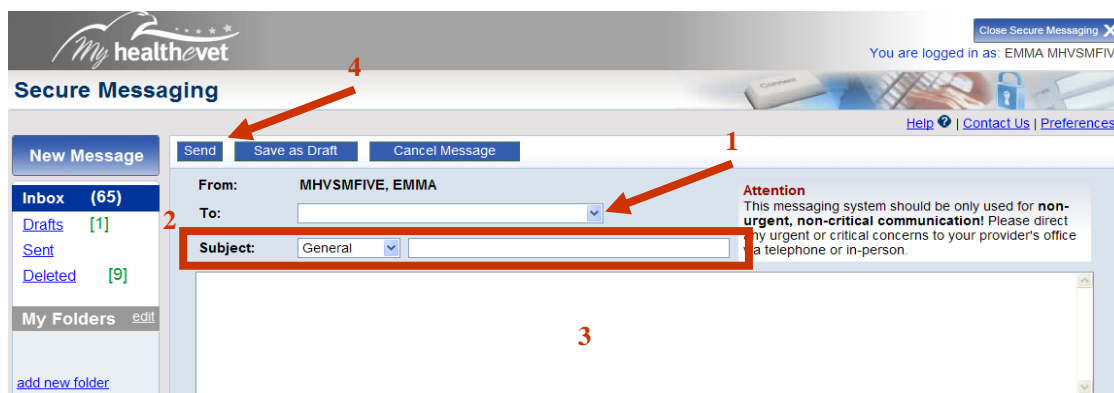
Step 1 (a) - Include an Attachment with your message

A **Secure Messaging Attachment** is a file that you can include on a **Secure Message** to your VA health care team. Your attachment should relate to your health.

This feature allows you to share the results of tests, procedures, or health care summaries that you have obtained from your non-VA providers with your VA health care team. It should not be used to send non-health related information.

To include an attachment with your message:

1. Select the Health Care Team for whom the message is for by selecting the drop-down arrow ⌄ for **To:** – please note, only your participating VA Health Care Team will appear in the list.

2. Select the **Attach a file** link on a new **Secure Message** or on a **Secure Message** that you are replying to.
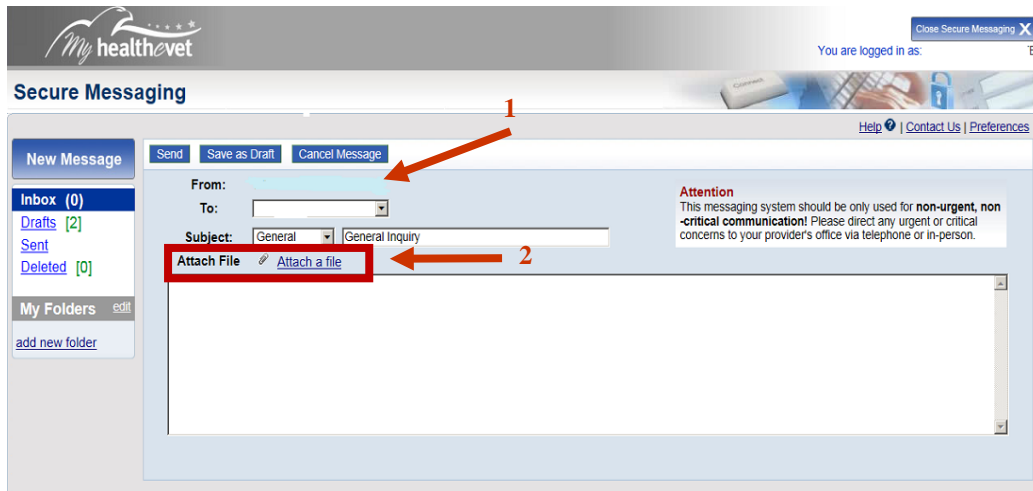
3. Now go to your computer by selecting the **Browse** button and select the file you would like to attach. At this time you can only include one (1) **Attachment** on a **Secure Message** not to exceed three (3) megabytes (MB).
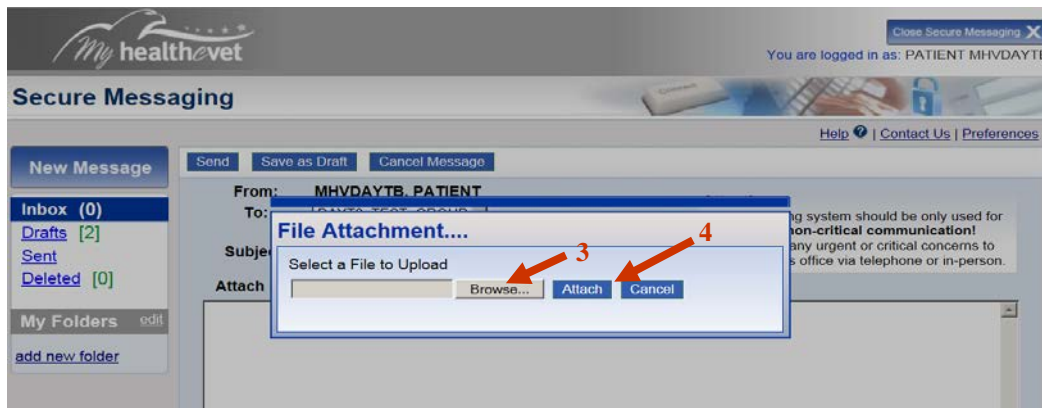
You can include the following file formats as **Secure Messaging Attachments**:

- **Text file** (txt): a filename extension for text files
- **Portable Document Format** (pdf): a file format used to represent documents in a manner independent of application software, hardware, and operating system
- **DOC file** (doc): a word processing file format, typically used by Microsoft Word
- **Microsoft Excel file format** (xls): a spreadsheet file format
- **Graphics Interchange Format** (gif): a bit map image format
- **Joint Photographic Group** (jpg): bitmap compression format for picture and image files
- **Rich Text Format** (rtf): a document file format developed by Microsoft for cross-platform document interchange

- **Portable Network Graphics** (png): a raster graphics file format that supports
  lossless data compression

4.   Then select the **Attach** button.

In order to provide you with outstanding health care services, your health care /triage team may decide to save some of your **Secure Messaging Attachments** in your VA medical record. Doing this allows them the ability to refer to the information at a later date.

IMPORTANT: If you are using a public computer, the safest way to view your health data is to choose the view/print option for the .TXT file. If you chose to open or download a PDF file, you create a temporary file on the computer. This file can be viewed by others. To reduce the chance of others viewing your information, you should not download your data when using public or shared computers. To learn more about how you can safe guard your information, visit Protecting Your Personal Information.

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Step 2 - Read Messages Sent

1. Select a message under the **From** column

2. To view and read the entire message, select the link to the message as show below under the **Subject** column.

3. If there are any previous messages within this thread of messages they will be viewable at the bottom of the message in the **Previous Messages in Thread** section.

4. If your Health Care Team sent you a file you will see an attachment icon 🖉 and a link next to the Subject fields. To open the attachment, select the link next to the Subject fields (follow your computer's instructions for opening or saving the attachment).

5. You have the ability to print messages. Select the **Print Message** button and then select the Print link at the top of the page (follow your computer's instructions for printing). When you have completed printing the message select the **DONE** link at the top of the screen.

Step 3 - Reply / Send Messages

After reading a message, select the **Reply** button.
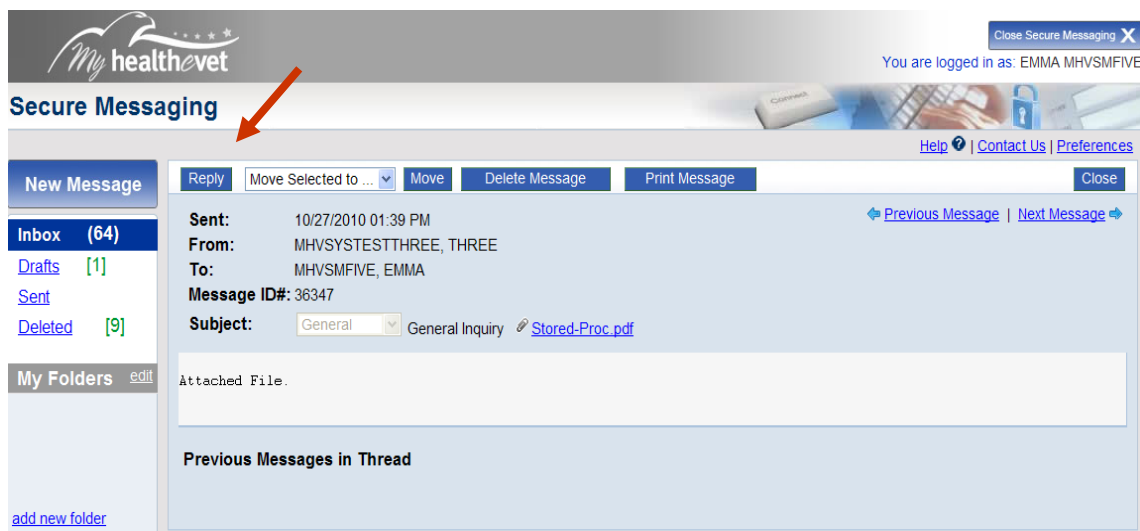
After selecting the **Reply** button, type a response, and then select the **Send** button.
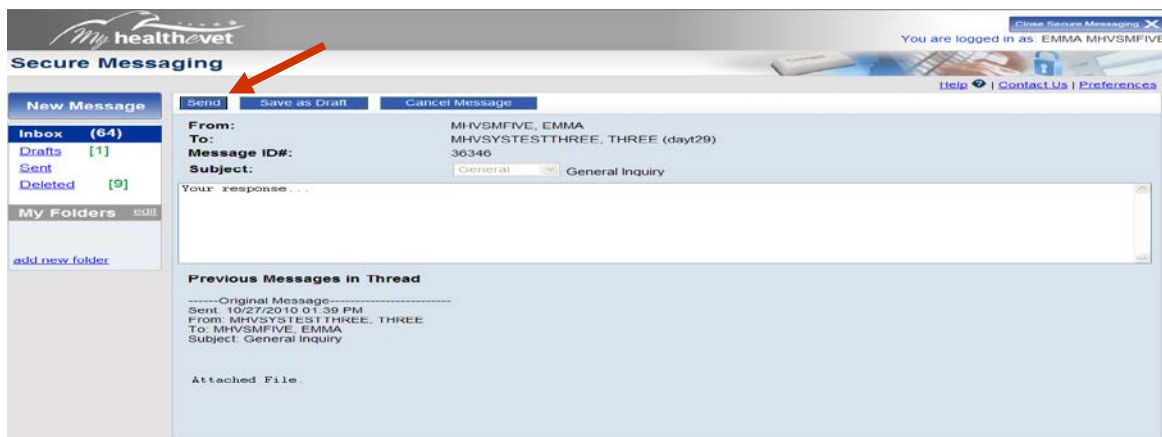
Step 4 - Delete / Close Messages

After reading a message you can choose to delete or close the message.

1. To delete a message, select the **Delete Message** button. Secure Messaging will move the message to the Deleted folder located under the **New Message** button on the left side of the screen. **Note:** Secure Messages stay in the Deleted folder for 12 months. They are then archived in the Secure Messaging database. You can contact the Release of Information Office at your local VA health care facility to get archived messages. To find the nearest location, use the VA Facility Locator.

2. To close a message, select the **Close** button on the right side of the screen. Secure Messaging will close the message (it will remain in your Inbox).
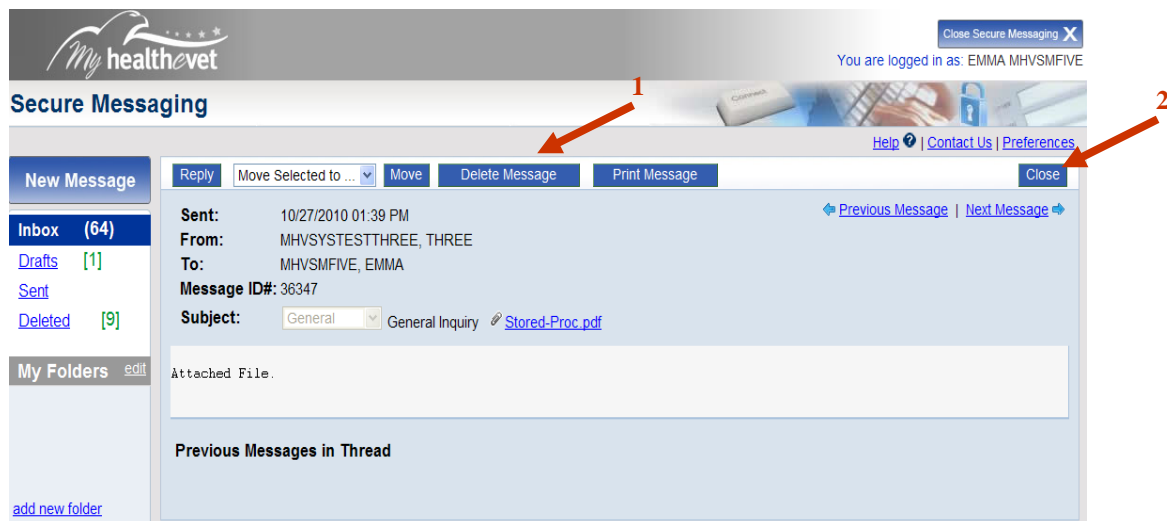
Step 5 - Save Messages as Draft

After writing a new message or a response to a message (you must have selected a recipient, Subject, and typed a message), you can save the message as a draft.

1. Select the **Save as Draft** button.

2. Secure Messaging will save the message in the Drafts folder. In order to retrieve the draft message, select the Drafts link under the **New Message** button on the left side of the screen.
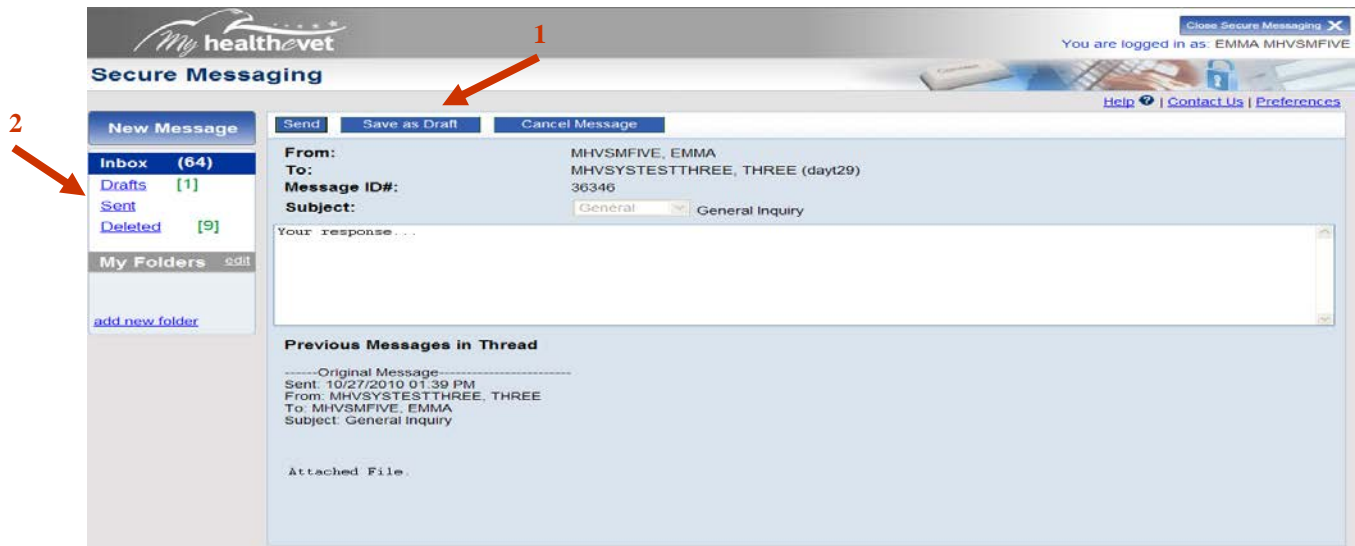
User Preferences/Settings
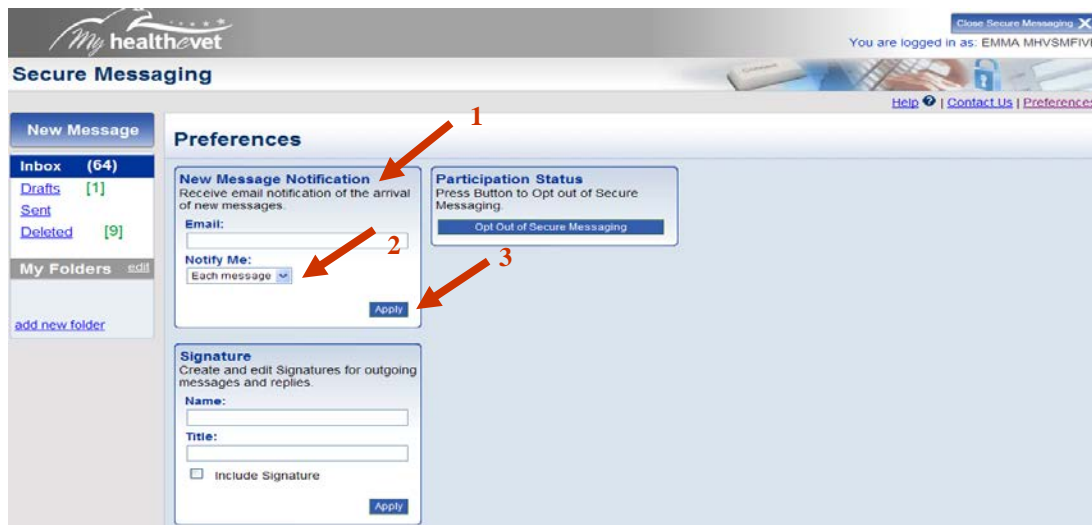
My Health*e*Vet Secure Messaging allows you to set various preferences within your account.
To access the Preferences section, select the Preferences link.
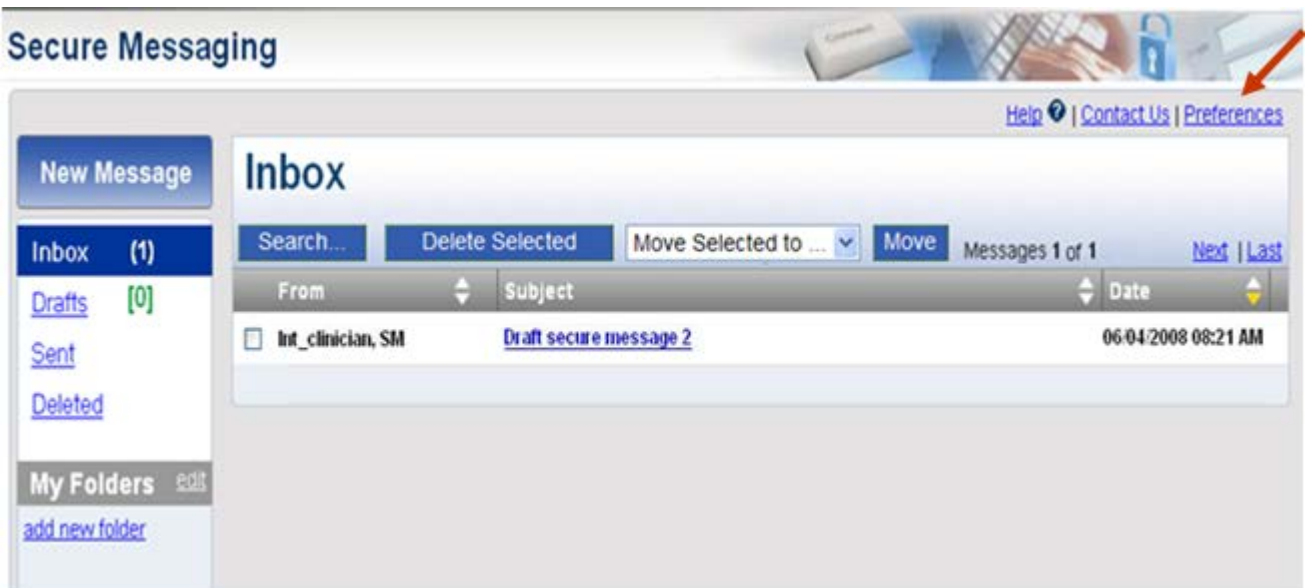
Step 1 - New Message Notification

You have the ability to receive an email letting you know when a new message has arrived in your My Health*e*Vet Secure Messaging account. The email will be a simple message that states you have a message waiting in My Health*e*Vet Secure Messaging.

1. On the Preferences page under **New Message Notification**, type your email address in the **Email:** field. (If you provided an email address when you registered with My Health*e*Vet this field will be filled in with that email address. You can make changes to the email address if you wish.)

2. Select the drop-down arrow ⌄ under **Notify Me:** to select your preference for when to be notified by My Health*e*Vet – select either **All messages** to receive a notification with the arrival of every message in your Secure Messaging account, or select **Once daily** to only receive a notification once a day for any messages that arrive in your Secure Messaging account.

3. Select the **Apply** button to save your preferences.

Step 2 - Participation Status

You have the ability to change your participation status from **Opt In** to **Opt Out**.
On the Preferences page, select the **Opt Out of Secure Messaging** button to change your participation status.

You will be re-directed to the Terms & Conditions page.

You must select the radio button next to **Opt Out** and then select the **Submit** button.

 Note: You will be asked to confirm your decision to Opt Out (select the **Confirm** button).

Once you opt out of Secure Messaging, you will no longer be able to send **Secure Messages** to your VA Health Care Team through My Health*e*Vet.

Note: If you decide to opt out and then opt back in, any previous messages in your account will not be retrievable.

Step 3 - Signature

You also have the ability to add a signature block to all messages that you send through Secure Messaging.

1. Type your name as you wish it to appear in the signature block (required field).
2. Type a title to be included in your signature (required field).
3. Select the check box next to Include Signature.
4. Select the **Apply** button.

Additional Information on Secure Messaging

* * * Remember: Secure Messaging should be only used for **non-urgent**, **non-critical** communication. This section covers how you can get assistance, such as:
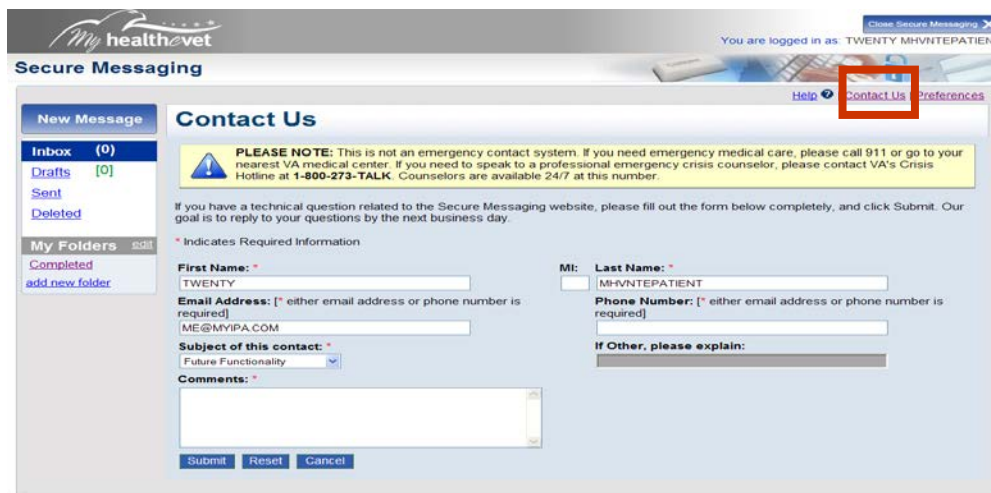
- **Help** to find more information about the page you are viewing
- **Contact Us** to send a message to the My Health*e*Vet Help Desk
- **About MHV** offers tips and tools to help you partner with your health care team
- **Frequently Asked Questions** to get answers to common questions
- **Protecting Your Personal Information** offers tips about safe guarding your information

Help - As with all My Health*e*Vet pages, if you need additional help with using Secure Messaging select the Help 🛈 link located at the top of every screen within Secure Messaging.
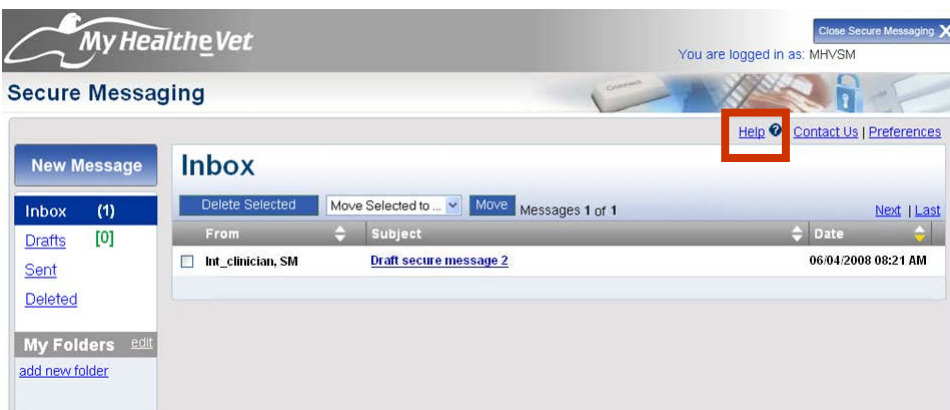
Contact US - And, you can use the Contact Us link to submit a question / suggestion to the My Health*e*Vet Help Desk.

Remember: Always log out of your account when you are finished using My Health*e*Vet.

To log out of Secure Messaging, select the **Close Secure Messaging** button located at the top of the screen. When you close Secure Messaging, you will be returned to the My Health*e*Vet website. Make sure you logout of your My Health*e*Vet account before walking away from your computer.
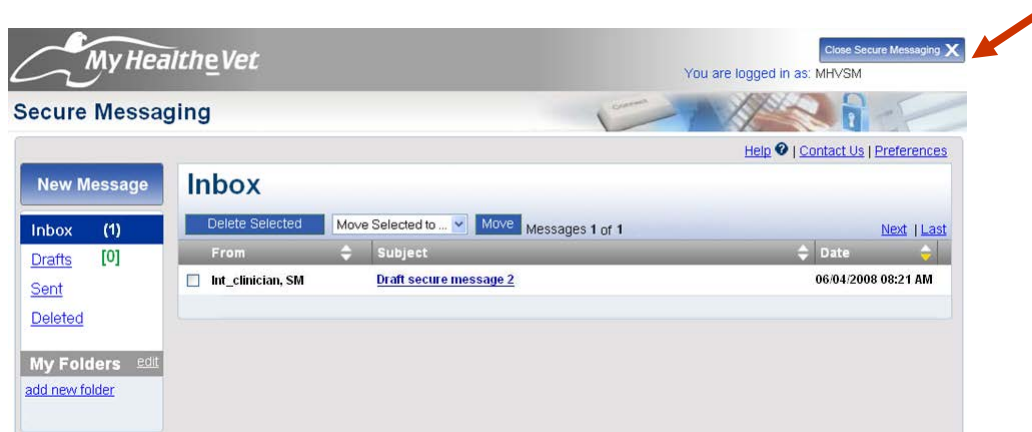
At the top of the My Health*e*Vet homepage, are tabs that will take you to helpful resources:

- [About MHV](#) offers you tips and tools to help you partner with your health care team, so together you may work to manage your health. Here you may find useful resources when you need them. The support tools on this page are designed to enrich your experience with My Health*e*Vet.

- **FAQs,** takes you to the [Frequently Asked Questions](#) (FAQs) page. There you can get answers to common questions about the Secure Messaging.

Protecting Your Personal Information - The Department of Veterans Affairs takes safeguarding and protecting your information very seriously. You should, too. You control access to your personal information. It is your responsibility to keep your information private and protected. To help protect your privacy, My Health*e*Vet is provides you with some important points to remember. Visit [Protecting Your Personal Information](#) to learn more.

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